1:Griffiths M-5 (ca. 1940) 1946 AW37 Kol AW37

spread and well known tribes of the Central Uplands extending from Kolhan in the district of Singhbhum and as far west as the Chitor Hills. Contact with them was from the earliest as shown by the name "Kolarian", still used by many in a generic sense for the languages and people of the Munda group. Dr. Griffiths' account of the Kols in a readable handy form is expected to remove much of this want. As a missionary of the Methodist Church, who spent many years in Jubbulpore, Dr. Griffiths had great opportunity of intimate acquaintance with the Kols of this part and his account, therefore, is based on deep personal knowledge. The Kols described by him, however, are greatly acculturated with Hindu ideas and beliefs and do not retain their original practices in the same form and extent as those living in the interior of Rewa. Nevertheless, Dr. Griffiths has succeeded in discovering traces of many interesting customs not hitherto described. Such for example is the practice of local or village exogamy (pp. 69-70) although clan-Kurhi (or Got from Sans Gotra) exogamy is no longer prevalent (p. 52). The author considers that totemism has lost its significance among the Kols (p. 54), but Russell and Hiralal mention (The Tribes and Castes of the Central Provinces, Vol. III, pp. 510-11) the names of several totemistic septs among the Mandla Kols, *e.g.*, the Bargaiyan Kols, the Kathotia, the Katharia, and the Kumhra, who show special reverence to the Banyan tree, the Tiger, the Mattress and the Gourd respectively. Other apparently totemistic septs are the Mudia or Mudrundia, the Bhuwar, Nathunia and the Karpatia. Some of them such as Kathautia and Kathariya, Kurha, Bhumiya, Mudia (Murha) find place in the list of 22 clans given by the author (pp. 32-33). The possibility of a totemistic basis of their social organization is strongly suspected, but may perhaps be investigated with greater chances of success among the wilder Kols of Kaimur Hills, and those living in the interior of the Rewa State. Another interesting feature noted by the author is the use of bangles, specially made from metals like copper and iron, as effective protection against evil spirits, and of beads as defensive ornaments against the evil eye in children (p. 180).

The book is illustrated with drawings and well chosen photographs taken by the author, but there are unfortunately several printing errors and certain inconsistencies in the writing of the names of works cited, *e.g.*, W. Crooke's work is cited as "The Tribes and Castes of the North Western Provinces and Oudh" on p. 4, but on p. 33, the same work is written as—"Tribes and Castes of *North-West* Provinces and Oudh." Similarly Dr. Verrier Elwin's "The Baiga" is written incorrectly as *The Baigas*.

These small blemishes, however, do not detract from the real

1;Griffiths M-5 (ca. 1940) 1946 AW37 Kol AW37

Sheori was foolish and has brought the Kols into great economic difficulties with her choice of children. However, when asked who the father of these children was they looked rather startled and could give no answer. They were but the gift of Bhagawan. The first five brothers so born eventually scattered and founded various subdivisions: Binj, Thakuriya and Kathautiya being mentioned. The first brother went to the Binj mountains and thus the Binj *kurku* was formed. Bhagawan's boon was granted to Sheori in the jungles near the modern Sheori-Narayana, not far from Raipur, and today there is a great temple there to which all castes may go and worship.

Such traditions as the above are significant as folklore, but indicate that the Kol accounts cannot be very old and certainly not pre-historic, nor can they give us much real information concerning the place of their origin nor their migrations. They are too much diluted with Hindu mythologies and were undoubtedly drawn from Ramayana stories and coloured by their own imagination. They do indicate, however, a definite movement of thought. Even though the Kols possessing a primitive animistic outlook have come into contact with Hinduism and have accepted certain Hindu deities, nevertheless the acculturation has not been complete: the tribal god (Sheori, a goddess in this case), is even yet given preference over Hindu gods, and this in spite of possibly some 3,000 years of contact.

Up till now but little information has been available about this interesting group, and there is still much that should be done. This study is mainly of the Kols who are in contact with Hinduism, and no attempt is made to isolate the primitive Kol. Further detailed and systematic fieldwork will undoubtedly supplement and may even correct some of the statements found here, and it is not claimed that this should be taken as the last word on the Kols of Central India.

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Chapter II

THE MATERIAL CULTURE OF THE KOLS

There is considerable variation in the material culture of the Kols. This is due to the economic changes which rapidly occur when these primitive people come into contact with cities and their industrial order. The Kols make excellent workers, and in many of the industrial centres of Central India the majority of the cheap labour is supplied by them. This group, however, is not typical of the Kols; and the following description of their material culture is based upon the village Kol, who, while having considerable contact with modern influences, still clings mostly to the older ways known to his people for centuries.

The Village. While this study is particularly of the Kols who are in contact with Hindu culture, nevertheless a few words should be written about the more primitive Kols who live in villages tucked away in some rather inaccessible spot. Such villages are usually not found among the trees of the forest, but in an open space. The form which the village takes depends on the terrain and also upon the general custom of the area. The Gonds generally build their houses in separate enclosures, each an individual unit. We have found a few Kol villages of this type. Sometimes there have been two or three houses within a thorny stockade.

It is more usual, however, to find the Kols grouped together as a single unit. The form of the primitive village varies, but the shoe-string type predominates. The village has but the one central pathway which winds between small courts plastered with mud and cow dung situated immediately in front of the house. The court is usually clean, the pathway seldom so.

Primitive villages do not show many signs of permanency. The huts are of a type that can be destroyed over night if it should seem wise to shift the village. In actual practice, however, the Kol does not make a move quickly. Most of these villages though very temporary in their make-up have nevertheless been in existence for years.

The cattle sheds, where they exist, form a part of the hut and may only be distinguished from human habitations by the fact that they are more open. The Kols do not keep pigs, nor do they have gardens about their huts. Sometimes a form of pumpkin may be allowed to grow by the wall and climb over the roof. A *nim* tree (*Melia azadirachta*) will usually be found on the central pathway and under it a raised platform of mud where most of the village worship is observed. There are, generally speaking, no well defined village

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342 823 [171] [177] BUILDING CUSTOMS. Like their village neighbours about them, Kols have numerous superstitions relating to houses and certain customs in connection with their construction. In India, it has been said, "a house should face north or east and not south or west, as the south is the region of Yama, the God of Death, who lives in Ceylon, and the west is the quarter of the setting sun."[1] Kols are not quite so particular in this respect although due to Hindu influences there is a general tendency to follow this plan. The Kols observe a general rule which is that if the house is to be longer than it is wide, the greatest length should be parallel to the north-south line.

When a new house is about to be built in a village, its actual position is generally determined in relation to the other houses about it. If the position of the house is not limited by other houses, and if there is doubt as to the location, a Hindu *pandit* is sometimes called to help decide the exact place. The *pandit* consults astrological factors as from these he is said to be able to determine whether the place is suitable or not, or if an evil spirit lives on that spot or nearby. If the report should be unfavourable, another spot is selected and the process repeated. When satisfactory, the *pandit* will also fix the day on which work should begin on the construction of the building. For this service he is paid two annas to a rupee according to the ability of the builder to pay.

342 If the house is not to be permanent little or no ceremony is observed in connection with its building, as it is considered a temporary structure which can be broken up in a few minutes.

If, however, the house is one with mud walls and is of a more permanent nature, there are certain customs which are quite generally observed. The foundation trench is first dug although this may be hardly more than a levelling of the ground on which the walls will stand. A "foundation stone" is usually placed somewhere in the [782] trench, and beneath it are put two pice, some rice coloured yellow with turmeric and an areca nut (*Areca catechu*). The walls are constructed of mud with a certain amount of cow dung and straw mixed in to insure its stability.

One of the pictures[2] shows a Kol house in the process of construction. This particular house was being built on the site of another house. In this case, which was observed for some time, the following customs were noted, and found also to apply to other [789] cases of building.

Just within the threshold of the single entrance to the house there

1 Russell and Hiralal, *The Tribes and Castes of Central Provinces*, Vol. III, p. 88.
2 See Plate VIII.

1:Griffiths M-5 (ca. 1940) 1946 AW37 Kol AW37

USE OF FIRE. Matches are fast finding their way into the villages of India and as a result primitive ways of making fire are disappearing. Enquiries among Kols in sections where matches are not generally in use showed that they have two primitive methods of making fire. Even here it is not often necessary to prepare fire afresh, as it is usually

Fig. 10

kept in ignited lumps of cow-dung, which burn slowly and are not easily extinguished. It is not infrequent to see, in such villages, a woman going from one house to another taking with her a smoking piece of cow-dung to start her own fire.

The most usual method is to strike a stone against iron. The spark is directed into a bit of cotton from the *simal* tree (*Bombax malabaricum*) which is very easily ignited. Kols collect and preserve the cotton for this purpose. The second method often practised is that of rubbing together two well-dried sticks of the *pipal* tree (*Ficus religiosa*). One stick is notched. A sawing method is used, and a bit of *semal* cotton dropped into and around the notch, where the heat generated by friction ignites it. This is carefully nursed and transferred to dry leaves and grass.

FOODS AND THEIR PREPARATION. Like most village and common folk in India the Kols have two meals a day : one about noon and the other late at night. Early in the morning something is usually taken before going out to work. This may consist of a *chapati* or a bit of rice left over from the night before. The two main meals are almost similar and there is usually no variation in the menu. In the season when rice is cheapest, it will form the main part of the meal ; or when wheat is the cheaper, this is eaten in the form of *chapatis*. In Rewa millet is frequently used. Along with these main articles a little vegetable curry and some pulse is usually eaten. Meats are not taken regularly as they are too expensive, but Kols eat most meats except beef. These

1:Griffiths M-5 (ca. 1940) 1946 AW37 Kol AW37

Til tel from (*Sesamum indicum*). Occasionally *kusum tel* from *Sleichera trijuga*. 262

Vegetables, in season and according to price: Greens of various types called *sags*. These are cooked like spinach and similar greens. Egg plant; pumpkin; potato; yams; onion; corn; okra; jungle roots and leaves. These are usually cut into bits and cooked together in water to make a thick soup, which is flavoured with spices and poured over the rice, or eaten with the *chapatis*. [252]

Fruits in season: The common fruits such as mango, custard apple, guava, jack-fruit. The forest fruits such as those belonging to the fig types: *Jitia Pipar* (*Ficus religiosa*); *Bar* (*Ficus Bengalensis*); *Dumbar* (*Ficus glomerata*). Also the *Jamun* (*Eugenia jambolana*); *Kusum* (*Sleichera trijuga*); the *Bel* (*Aegle marmelos*); the *Khajur*, the fruit of the wild date palm (*Phoenix sylvestris*); the *Ber* (*Zizyphus jujuba*).

Dairy Products: Milk, clarified butter (*ghi*), milk curds.

Meats: Chicken, goat, mutton, buck, hare, pork, fish.

Condiments include salt, *chatnies* made from fruits such as the mango or the tamarind, and the "seven spices," which include *khaskhas*, from poppy heads; *jira*, cummin seed; *haldi*, turmeric; *rai*, mustard; *nariyal*, cocoanut; *gol mirch*, pepper; *lahasun*, garlic; *lal mirch*, red chillis. 263

Sweet spices used include *ilachi*, cardamom; *long*, clove; *darchini*, cinnamon.

The general preparation of the chief dishes used by Kols may be briefly described as follows. They are arranged according to ingredients. Certain of them have been borrowed from their Hindu neighbours. 252 [171]

Chapatis. Whole wheat flour is used together with a little salt. The whole is moistened with hot water and made into a dough which must be well mixed before it is rolled or patted into a pancake. This is cooked on a hot fry-pan until well browned. It must often be turned in the process.

Puris are a very special dish and are often offered to the deity at the time of religious worship. There are many kinds of *puris* possible. A *puri* is essentially a *chapati* fried in clarified butter. Usually white flour is used, and occasionally some *dal* or shortening is mixed in.

Rice (*Chawal*). The cheaper rice is simply boiled with water until the grains are well done. Indian rice, when properly cooked does not stick, but the grains are flaky. The rice water is poured off and is often used as a gruel.

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same as Borowar on our list; Bin and Binj are probably the same, and Harwariya may have become Garhwariya; the ploughman becoming the fortress-dweller.

Russell and Hiralal[1] state that they found the subcastes noted below, but their results appear to be based on materials gathered from the eastern edge of the Central Provinces. It will be noted that there are points of agreement and disagreement between their list and ours: Rautia, Rautele, Thakuriya, Kagwaria, Desaha, Bharia, Savar and Khairwar. They also include as "totemistic septs" the following: Bargaiyan, Kathotia, Katharia, Kumhra and Bhuwar.

1. *Rautiya.* This designation is believed to be derived from the word Rawat meaning "a prince," and as such may be traced to some ancient landholding or warrior group among the Kols in centuries past. This group claims to be the highest of the Kol *kurkis* and such assertions were usually not disputed by either Thakuriyas or others in joint group discussions; although on one or two occasions it was controverted as recorded under the Thakuriya (*vide p.* 41). Almost without exception the Rautiyas make use of the Brahmin priest at the time of wedding, and of the Hindu *nai* or barber, and the *dhobi* or washerman in certain ceremonies connected with birth and death. Not to do this would be to sin against social conventions; yet in one or two cases we were told that if a Rautiya is too poor to employ a Brahmin he might make other arrangements. This probably means that far back in their history they attended to such matters themselves, but have now become Hinduized and feel unable to act for themselves. Rautiyas made the claim that they move freely among Hindus and are recognized by them in a manner that other Kol *kurkis* are not. While the group is theoretically endogamous, hypergamy is occasionally practised with the Thakuriyas. This is probably a relic from the time when intermarriage was common, but the process of Hinduization has now stabilized the *kurkis*. They admit that if necessary Thakuriya girls may be married to Rautiya boys, but deny that they ever give their girls in marriages to Thakuriyas. If a *swasaha* Rautiya—those whom perform marriage without the help of a Brahmin—has an eligible son they would give their daughter to him in marriage only if it is agreed that the Brahmin priest and the *nai*, will officiate in the regular way.

Rautiyas have a very definite taboo in the case of the horse. Horse manure is absolutely forbidden to be touched. There are several curious stories that came to our attention. One of them is that in the dim ages past Bhagawan gave the Kols the gift of a horse. In a few

1 Russell and Hiralal, *Op. Cit.*, Vol. III, Article Kol.

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564 713 so badly that they dropped the *palki* in which the girl was being carried, and ran away as fast as they could. The poor girl was at the mercy of the tiger, who brought her to the boy, and gave her to him to be his wife. The tiger then released the boy from his forest life and together the new couple left the jungle and went to Sheori who was the boy's relative, as his mother belonged to Sheori's family. The offspring of this couple became the Binj Kols.

These two stories do not even make the same point but both probably preserve certain traditions: one of a connection with the Binj mountains and the other of some inter-marriage with jungle Baigas or Binjhwars.

564 [564] 4. *Khangar*. There is a distinct group of village watchmen and field labourers of low caste called by this name and found mostly in northern central India and in the United Provinces. The name is said to be derived from the words *khanā*, a pit, and *gar*, a maker or digger; because the Khangar digs holes in other peoples' houses for the purpose of theft. According to another account the name is derived from *khadgahar* meaning a Kshatriya or warrior, who earns his livelihood by means of a *khadga*, or sword.

177 793 554 583 85 171 With regard to Kol Khangars we were told that they were *patitahas*, not making use of Brahmins or other Hindus in social events, such as marriage. They are considered low on the social scale and Rautiyas always avoid them. If a Rautiya girl elopes with a Khangar she can never be received back, and the offspring are Khangars. In Chota Nagpur there is a Khangar tribe which is a branch of the Munda group. The following story is told of their origin:

> Two Munda brothers were travelling with their wives from one place to another. One of the brothers and his wife preceded the other brother in the country. On the way, the former brother's wife was brought to bed of a child. While leaving the place the Munda couple buried the placenta etc., in the hearth which they had improvised at their temporary lodging. Soon afterwards, the other brother came up there with his wife. On opening up the hearth he discovered the placenta etc., buried there and thought that his brother had bagged some game and left a portion of the meat for him to cook and eat. And so the couple unsuspectingly ate the unclean meat. When the brothers met, and the truth was known, the brother who had eaten the unclean meat was excommunicated and his descendants became Khangars.[1]

1 Roy, S. C., *The Mundas and Their Country*, p. 401.

1:Griffiths M-5 (ca. 1940) 1946 AW37 Kol AW37

[P.55]

Chapter IV

BIRTH, CHILDHOOD, PUBERTY

For the Kols there are certain very obvious turning points of life, and at such times Kols believe that evil is present, ready to render the outcome of events unfavourable. To Kols the anxiety is not merely one born of a physical crisis but goes deeper into their consciousness, for at such times favourable supernatural aid must be secured or the evil spirits will triumph over them. Hence at these turning points there are certain rites and ceremonies which must be observed and recourse should not be had to some newer unknown and untried method. Kols are unable to give a rational account of why they perform these rites; as far as they are concerned it is just the custom. Though in many cases the customs may have been adopted from Hinduism, it was so long ago that Kols are now altogether unconscious of it. It should be remembered, therefore, that many of the things described in this connection will also be found true of the village folk all over this part of Central India. An attempt has been made by long and patient enquiry to find out what the Kols themselves do on these important occasions, but we have not sought to compare them with other groups in this regard.

Birth Customs. *Pregnancy.* The pregnant mother is not considered unclean and there are no particular taboos placed upon her. She is allowed to go about her regular work and do all cooking and household duties without restriction. She may eat what she likes and there are no foods which she must avoid other than those a Kol never uses. She should be careful, however, not to go near places where *bhuts* and other evil spirits are known to lurk, they might attack her and as a result cause a miscarriage. When the woman comes to know that she is pregnant the matter is taken to the family goddess—*devi*—who is usually resident in one corner of the house and she is promised that she will receive an offering if she protects the mother and the unborn babe for the full time of pregnancy. After delivery, or often shortly before if all has gone well, the family will present to the *devi* the particular things that they had promised her. This may be an animal such as a goat, pig or chicken, or just a cocoanut. Again, the simple *hom* offering or fire sacrifice is common. This consists of an oblation of clarified butter (*ghi*) placed in the fire burning before the *devi*, the anointing of the wall with vermilion (*sendur*) and the

1;Griffiths M-5 (ca.1940) 1946 AW37 Kol AW37

vary considerably, but the accompanying text figure 18, shows a form that was found by us. [537]

During the time the woman is confined to the house the man goes about his work just the same and no trace of the couvade has been found. If it can be managed, on the twelfth day after birth there is further rejoicing with a family feast. [574]

CHILDHOOD RITES. *Naming the Child.* Amongst the Kols of Central India the giving of the name, so important in some primitive cultures, does not seem to hold a place of any great significance. Of course certain things as noted below are done, but no trace was found of any magical rites used in the selection of names, such as Roy describes in the case of the Oraons and the Kharias.[1] There is no fixed time within which the name must be given. Under more primitive conditions we have found that often no ceremony whatsoever was in use, and when a name was given the Brahmin priest was not called in. While there is no set time for the giving of the name it is generally preferred that it be given from ten to fifteen days after birth. The proposed name may be discussed in the family before hand, and actually given to the child by one of its parents or near relatives, a friend, or even a stranger. In the latter instance we were told on two occasions that should a *chaudhari* Chamar happen to pass through the village at a propitious time he might be requested to name the child. At the time of the bestowal of the name, in the case where the family selects the name itself, the child is taken into the arms of the person giving the name who then formally announces it to those present. Until such a name is given the child is called by a pet name, *dadu* for the boy and *butu* for the girl. In Kotmi, near the borders of Rewa State, the village priest, the Kol *panda*, gives the child a name and receives four pice for this act. At the same time, being the official vaccinator, he vaccinates the child against small pox: it is a crude vaccination, but in this way the Government is able to provide some protection from the disease. [564] [751]

Among the more Hinduized Kols use is made of the Brahmin priest. He is called upon to select the child's name and does this from a list of names in his possession which are considered auspicious for children born at certain seasons. He is paid from one to four annas for this performance. It is common to find names derived from days of the week, and Monday and Tuesday, *Somvara* and *Mangalbara* are said to be the best; the child is never named after Saturday. Again, the name of the month may be used, as in the case of the name Phagu, [793]

1 Roy, S. C., *Oraon Religion and Customs*, p. 129; *The Kharias*, pp. 306 ff.

1:Griffiths M-5 (ca. 1940) 1946 AW37 Kol AW37

553 derived from the month of *Phagun* (February-March), or the town or village of his birth may be selected. More often though, the name of some Hindu deity or hero is given: combinations of Ram being common as Ram Prasad, Ram Avatar and the like. In Appendix II is given a list of Kol names.

551 It is common though, to find that the name thus officially given to the child is seldom used in actual life and a pet name or *alias* is used. This name is often a coarse one, or one considered inauspicious. The real name is kept secret and often forgotten and the child becomes known by his alias. A name is really part of one's personality and can be misused if obtained possession of by an unfriendly person or spirit. So the child may be called *Makkhi* (fly), *Ghatita* and *Ghasu* (pulled up, useless), *Pagal* (crazy), *Langra* (lame), *Ghuruwa* (filth) or *Kana* (one-eyed). When directly asked why such names as these are given two answers were commonly given: the first is that high caste people did not like to hear low caste people called by high-sounding names. This is probably a rationalization, though there may be truth in it. The second answer was the frank avowal that some malicious [754] person or *bhut* might come to know of the real name and through it work some mischief on the person concerned.

852 *Hair Cutting*: *Mundan*. Occasionally this also becomes an
302 opportunity for a ceremony of a special kind, but like name-giving a great deal is not made of it; particularly among the more primitive Kols. [177] If the family is somewhat Hinduized they may have the hair cut on the banks of the sacred Nerbudda River; or the ceremony may be performed in the house by calling the Hindu *nai*, who shaves the head, leaving but a small top-knot called the *choti*. Adult Kols, however, [782] do not always keep the *choti*. If they can afford it a young kid or pig is sacrificed at this time and the blood sprinkled over a fire placed before some *devi* such as Shardamai. The animal is then cooked and is feasted upon by all. The *nai* may be paid one rupee for his services. The time of hair cutting is not fixed, but it is generally done between the time of the close of the mother's impurity and the first anniversary of the child's birth. Yet there are exceptions to this, even if it be the regular procedure, for we have often seen Kol boys with uncut and unkempt hair. When the older folks have been asked why this is allowed they have given various answers. One family said that they would not cut their child's hair until they returned to their native land of Rewa when it would be "properly" cut. Another said that until there was a marriage in the family they would not cut the child's hair. It is also held that it is left uncut so that the demons will believe

1;Griffiths M-5 (ca. 1940) 1946 AW37 Kol AW37

852
that the child is a girl and let him alone, for it is boys that they really 302
try to get hold of.

Hair from the first cutting should never be thoughtlessly thrown [826]
out on the ground. The best thing to do is to wrap it in a small piece of cloth and take it to the Nerbudda River where it is thrown in as an offering. No special trip to the river is required and the hair may be kept in the house until some convenient season or until some friend or relative happens to be going that way. The belief that magic may be [754]
worked with hair is prevalent in India, but Kols do not seem to fear this danger, nor do they believe that another may work harm by possessing it.

852
FIRST FEEDING: *Pasni*. Most Kols attach considerable im- 853
portance to the child's first feeding with solid food. This should be done 862
when the child is about six months old. One group said that the [177]
feeding should be done at five months in the case of a girl and six months for a boy. This indicates Hindu influences.

The family invites as many of the child's relatives as they can 852
afford to feed for a general feast following the ceremony. The child 853
is to be fed with sweetened *khir*—rice boiled in milk—which has been 862
specially prepared for this occasion. A portion of *khir* is placed in a 574
small cup made from the leaves of the mango tree (*Mangifera indica*). As the ceremony begins, the friends and relatives wash their hands [515]
with water specially brought for them; the child's teeth, if in, are cleaned by being lightly brushed with a mango twig. The person who breaks the child's "fast", and this may be one of a number of relatives, [602]
among whom we find mentioned the name of the father, mother and father's sister (*phuphu*), first dips the index finger of the right hand into the *khir* and brings a portion up to the child's mouth but does not actually touch its lips, for the finger is immediately withdrawn. This movement is made six times, but on the seventh occasion the finger is put into the child's mouth and with it a bit of the *khir* is inserted. Others present follow in the same way until all have fed the infant. Each one who thus feeds the child is supposed to drop into a dish beside it some money, the amount varying according to circumstances: it ought not to be less than four pice and may be as much as eight annas. The money thus collected is used to buy silver bangles for the child.

Sometimes the child is fed with a silver coin rather than by the plain finger. This may be an influence of Hinduism. One group said the silver coin must be either a four or eight anna piece. The coin used is dipped into the *khir* and the baby fed on the seventh approach as in the above description. The *phuphu* receives the coins by which

1:Griffiths M-5 (ca. 1940) 1946 AW37 Kol AW37

Chapter VI

THE SOCIAL UNIT: THE FAMILY

The Kol Family. The basis of Kol society is found in the family. This family is patrilinear and patrilocal, with a recognition of the bilateral kinship group because important social relations are observed with the kin on both sides. Nevertheless the household usually contains only dependent members from the father's side, but there are no taboos for the other side of the family and visiting is allowed back and forth freely and without hindrance. No trace was found of a rupture in the parent-in-law relationship and no restrictions either in talking or associating were traced. In all, however, the family stands out as a distinct unit separate from the wider life of the community.

In a typical Kol family under the one roof will usually be found the husband, the wife (or wives), unmarried children, and occasionally some dependent member or members of the father's family, such as a widowed grandparent. Soon after marriage the Kol son usually sets up a home for himself. In the more primitive sections it is unusual to find a married son and his wife living with his parents. In the more Hinduized communities, where the Kols are better off and can afford more elaborate houses, married sons and their wives were frequently found living with the boy's parents. In one such home in Barela, for example, there were two married sons and their wives living with the boys' parents. This seems though to be an imitation of the Hindu family system, rather than a true Kol institution. The older dependents are found in the house only if their own homes are broken up by death. One occasionally finds an old couple living together in a little hut, and when one or the other dies the surviving member goes to live in a son's or another relative's house. In one centre, however, four such persons were found, each living alone in a little hut. They were either not wanted or had no relatives with whom they could reside.

In Barela and Kharara Ghat a survey was made of the number of people in each home or sheltered under one roof. The average number of people per house, excluding four houses where there was one each who was somehow *persona non grata* with relatives, was 3.9. In Kharara Ghat the average came to 4.8 persons per house. The 1931 Central Provinces Census Report reveals that primitive tribes average 3.8 children per family. The distribution of people was as follows:

[p. 101]

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1. *Barela*: *Persons reported*: *Houses reporting*: *Total for class.*

9	..	1	..	9
8	..	2	..	16
7	..	1	..	7
6	..	5	..	30
5	..	10	..	50
4	..	8	..	32
3	..	16	..	48
2	..	12	..	24
1	..	4	..	4
		59	..	220

2. *Kharara Ghat*:

9	..	2	..	18
8	..	..	..	..
7	..	2	..	14
6	..	5	..	30
5	..	6	..	30
4	..	6	..	24
3	..	4	..	12
2	..	4	..	8
		29	..	136

In the case of the Barela Kols the lower average is due to two causes: the first is that the town is near the main road and as the Kols are much more Hinduized as a community there is a natural loss of household members who leave home for work in Jubbulpore. The second is that the health of the Barela Kols is far less satisfactory than of those in Kharara Ghat, for the town is much more open to infection, and illnesses are more numerous.

THE POSITION OF WOMEN. The place of women among the Kols can be said to be fairly high. There is a wholesome sense of equality among the sexes. The women do not keep themselves in seclusion (*parda*), and are generally free to go about on any errand. In Hinduized sections they cover their heads in the presence of men or when they are outside their houses, but under primitive conditions they are not so particular. In a general sense the husband is the main authority

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busy and they will not bother the sweets. Often it is said that no particular ceremonies are observed as the body is being carried toward the burial place. Nothing is done at the time of the crossing of small streams.

Up to this time no work has been done at the funeral ground, and no one has gone ahead to prepare the grave, or pyre; all is done after the arrival with the body. The funeral ground is always near some stream or *nala* (dried up water-course). Kols practice both cremation and burial and it is usual that the dead are cremated only a few feet away from the place where the burials take place. The introduction of cremation may be due to Hindu influences. On the whole burials are far more common than cremations because, Kols suggest, they are much cheaper, and the subsequent formalities of gathering the ashes and taking them to a river are not necessary. Burial is much the simpler process, and is first described.

BURIAL (*Garna.*) The funeral party arrives at the *masan* where the body is put down, head north and feet south. Some of the men in the party have brought implements for digging and go to seek a suitable place to dig the grave. Others remain with the body and prepare it for burial.

Preparation of the Body. Up till this time it is usual to find that the person has on the clothes in which he died. As he was transported to the burial place a white cloth was thrown over him. Now this and the clothes are removed. In the case of a male corpse the men attend to the changing of the garments, the washing and anointing. If the corpse be of the opposite sex the women attend to everything connected with its preparation. The body is first washed with water brought by the women from the village tank or well in new *gharas*. No pregnant woman should carry water, nor should she accompany the procession to the funeral place. Some of the water may be retained for a ceremonial sprinkling when the people get back to the village. After the body has been washed and dried it is anointed with a mixture of *til* or *karwa* oil and *haldi*. Sometimes *ghi* is also rubbed on. The corpse is now ready to wrap in new clothes which have just been purchased. If the family is not able to afford new clothes old ones which have been carefully washed will do. The grave clothes must always be white no matter the sex or the age. No coloured cloth should be used. The old clothes are taken away by the Basor. The hair is oiled and combed and the body is made as attractive as possible. Sometimes, in more Hinduized situations, the *nai* is called to shave the body and to prepare the hair, but he is not usually called for a woman. If the body is

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any kind of wood may be used, but some more Hinduized groups say that *chandan* (sandalwood—*Santalum album*) is preferred. They may buy seven small bits of it which they place over the seven important points of the body, which may be then considered as covered with *chandan* wood. In building the pyre no trench is usually constructed, but a good base is built up and the body laid on the pyre in the same manner as in the grave, head north, feet south; in the case of a man face downwards and for a woman face upwards. More wood is piled on top and the pyre is ready for ignition. 764

Lighting the Pyre. The fire is brought in an earthen vessel from the home of the deceased and is usually preserved by the use of burning cow dung cakes. It is the duty of the chief mourner to light the funeral pyre. If the deceased is a father or mother the eldest son, if he is of age, lights the fire. If the deceased is a son or daughter the father lights the pyre. If there is no parent, the eldest and closest male relative lights it. The chief mourner takes a torch lighted from the cow dung cakes and keeping the body to his right walks about the pyre seven times. At each round he touches the head with the burning torch. After the seventh time the torch is thrown into the pyre. After that others may also light various parts of the pyre. [372 237]

It will be noted that so far the Hindu priest has not been called upon. Ordinarily he has no place in Kol funeral ceremonies. He is only utilized on the fairly rare occasions when Kols take the ashes to the river where they are thrown in ceremonially. In due course there follows a description of such ceremonies. But there is always a low caste Hindu present, usually from the Basor or Domar group in the case of the Kols, who collects the cast-off things—*charpai*, clothes, and the pice that may be left at the burning place or grave. Later he is given gifts at the house and has his part in the funeral feast. 764 177 [793]

Gathering the Ashes—Khari or *Rakhi.* Moving ahead, in order to keep the cremation account intact, it is found that on the third day after the cremation a party should return to the *murdyaghat* to collect the ashes. Some milk is first sprinkled, then the bones which are unburnt are collected. The chief mourner picks up the first pieces. This is done with the left hand and the pieces deposited in either a new cloth bag or a new *ghara*. Usually only the men pick up the bits of bones, but on occasions the women may assist. The pieces are kept in a suitable place for later disposal. The sooner this can be done the better; but as quick disposal is not always possible they are brought back from the *ghat* to the village. The ashes are never brought within 764

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764 the house, and preferably they should not be brought into the village, but this is not avoidable in all cases. It is usually the custom to hang the *ghara* in a tree at some distance from the house and village, although at times the *ghara* is buried after being sealed and the place above it is marked for later exhumation.

[798 It is preferable that the bones be taken direct from the burning *ghat* to the place of disposal, a sacred river being the most suitable place. 823] The Ganges and the Nerbudda are the best for this purpose; but if there is no immediate hope of being able to go to one of these all the bones and ashes except a mere fraction are thrown into a tank or a stream nearby and the residue is kept for a future trip to one of them. It may be two or three years before this can be done, and if a relative cannot take it a friend may do so.

After the ashes have been collected the place where the body was burned must be treated. It is first plastered, this being done by the women of the house, though the chief mourner may begin it. Over the plastered portion is now scattered the following, or some of the following: rice, rock salt, mustard seed, millet seed, and a little milk. [775 A two pice piece (*takka*) should also be deposited. These things have 789] a dual purpose: they serve the spirit of the departed and also protect it from the encroachment of evil spirits. The growth of the mustard plant, should it sprout, is said to be something in memory of the departed. Sometimes a little sugar "for the ants" is also scattered over the plastered place.

764 *Throwing the Ashes in the River.* We were told at a centre about ten miles from the Nerbudda river, how the ashes should be dealt with 177 if taken to the river. In this place following the more Hinduized 793 types of behaviour, they make use of a Brahmin priest. He performs a ceremony which is called *sirana*, meaning the "head side"; probably signifying the resting place of the head. The ashes are brought to him in the bag or *ghara* and he reads some sacred words from his books and makes a prayer to Yama, the god of death, to accept the spirit of the deceased. This is followed by a prayer addressed to the sacred river, Nerbudda *Mai*. She is implored to accept the ashes and to give peace to the departed spirit. The ashes are then cast into the river. The Brahmin receives a fee in cash or offerings.

764 Further north the Kols look to the Ganges as the river into which 778 the ashes should go if that is possible. The Kols in the south insist that the Nerbudda is just as sacred and as good as the Ganges. One man claimed that occasionally the ashes are divided, half being taken to the Nerbudda and the other half to the Ganges. The place where

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765 [302] The home is plastered, the barber is called and the faces are shaved and the nails of both hands and feet are pared. A special bath is taken and clean clothes put on. The people who are invited to such a feast are usually only relatives, though occasionally a larger group of the deceased's tribal friends may be invited. Others, who do not actually eat, are there to watch and talk, making quite a crowd. Special food has been prepared, and the things tabooed during the period of mourning are freely made use of and eaten at the feast. Hereafter all the members of the household, except the chief mourner, may freely partake of any food and there are no restrictions. The chief mourner eats this food at the feast, but for a year following must continue to observe the food taboos of the first ten days as noted above. There are no dishes or food peculiar to the funeral feast; it and the wedding feast may be much alike as far as the [262] kinds of foods are concerned—rice, pulse, curries, of either vegetables or meats, *puris*, *bara*, *dahi*, *chapatis*, and the like. The presence of a large group is considered desirable and is a sign of solidarity.

765 177 The first morsel consumed at the funeral feast should not be taken by a Kol. It is usually the custom to call in a Hindu lower caste man, a Basor, who eats this. At this time he is called *Mahabrahmin*—great priest.[1] He is summoned only in the case of adults. Certain of the deceased's possessions are also his right and he is given things such as the axe, knife, sickle, *kharpi*, etc. In Mathar the general report was that a Basor is never called in for any funeral feast. When called in it is the duty of the Basor to take the first morsel of food. He also has a right to take away with him the vessels from which [illegible] eaten, should they be of brass. If he is fed on a leaf plate he has the right to certain brass vessels used in serving. At any rate he gets something. No one can begin to eat till he has begun, and often he delays it, asking for a boon or gift of some kind. The Kols have been able to give no explanation of why he must be called. A Basor was also asked, and he said that it is because Kols fear to take the first bite, as it must be offered to the deceased and in his name. He might therefore come and possess the person who takes the first bite, and to avoid this possibility they call some one who is not of their family. Is not the Basor afraid? we enquired. No, he is not. The word *Mahabrahmin* is usually applied to the funeral priest, who is himself a Brahmin. Crooke[2] has given an account of his duties: the Basor seems to perform his duties for the Kols and they in return call him *Mahabrahmin*.

1 Dr. Guha suggests that the importance attached to the Basor may indicate that these observations were borrowed from the Hindus and that the Basor is the symbol of the Hindus.

2 Crooke, William, *Religion and Folklore of Northern India*, p. 144.

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After the Basor begins the others may start and all set out to enjoy themselves. Liquor is sometimes freely consumed on such occasions.

Another feast, a family one called *barkhi* (H. *Barsi*), is given after a year, and after this the chief mourner can eat as he likes; it also marks his entry into the society once again. During the year of mourning it is sometimes his custom to eat normal foods at home, but never to go to a feast elsewhere.

MISCELLANEOUS DEATH CUSTOMS. After the return from the graveyard there is no formal visiting of the spot unless it be for the purpose of putting food upon the grave. After three or four days someone from the household may pay the graveyard an informal visit to see if everything is all right and that the grave has not been disturbed by animals. No flowers are put on the grave at any time, and the bones are never dug up and buried again at some other place. Kols also say that they never throw bodies into the streams, although we were informed by one of them that it is sometimes done. At Satna in Rewa State it was related that some times a male corpse may be taken to a river, where the head is shaven by the Hindu *nai* whom they pay two to four annas. As the body is about to be cast into the river the mourners announce that they are ready to give the river a gift, naming a certain sum of money, which they will pay to the Brahmin presiding over that part of the river. The usual amount is Rs. 1-4. This is called *gaunda*—alms. As the body floats away they shout "Go and get salvation" and also the words, "we've been so long together, but from now on we are separated, you from us and we from you, and we shall now have nothing more to do with each other." After this they return to the house and bathe and prepare things as previously related.

There are adjustments necessary within the family after the death of the father or the mother. If the wife has died, all her clothes must be given away to the Domar or Basor. A second wife should never wear the clothes of a deceased woman. However, she may wear the metallic jewellery and ornaments of the first wife, and they are usually given to her.

If the father should die his clothes should also be given away. The widow has to break her glass bangles and this is usually done at the place and the time of the funeral. They may be broken by a member of the family, or a Hindu *nai* may be called. The widow is not required to put away her metallic ornaments.

There is no trace of *sati* or widow burning among the Kols. We found none who had ever heard of a Kolin doing it. One man said: "We

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and *devis*. For example, it is stated that he is able to send certain diseases such as smallpox and cholera. But while he may send them, it is of no use to ask him to banish them; for this a lesser deity like Khermai should be invoked. It is only if she fails, and if it seems necessary to avert further distress, that they will call to him and promise him that if he will save them they will send for a *pandit* and have a *katha* in the name of Bhagawan. It is our opinion that there is little trace, if any, of a higher conception of Bhagawan among the Kols of this area.

The contacts of the Kols with higher Hinduism is feeble and markedly inconsistent. Both Vishnuite and Sivaite elements are inextricably mixed, and while Rama, Krishna and other *avataras* of Vishnu are known and stories about them are related, they have nevertheless almost no significance in actual religious ceremonies. Again, while the phallic symbols characteristic of Sivaites are not often used by Kols, nor Sivaite temples frequented, nevertheless Kali, the wife of Siva, is propitiated. Taken as a whole, the Kol worship has in it but little of adoration. It is mostly a matter of propitiation. When asked why they do not worship in certain near-by Hindu temples, the answer has been that their fathers never worshipped there and why should they.

NATURE WORSHIP. In connection with the worship of the Supreme One, mention should be made of the relation of the Kols to the forces of nature, so often deified in Hindu thought. Primitive peoples all seem to have respect for the powers of the sky, air and earth; and while in the case of the Kols it appears to have lost its primitive expression, and become Hindu in ideology, it is nevertheless apparent in their thought.

The Sun. The Sun is usually thought of as a great God, a beneficent deity who is the source of all heat and light. It is stated that their forefathers worshipped the sun, and that they do also, but on examination this worship turns out to be very formal. The village shrine often faces the rising sun, but no image of the sun is ever made. He is often called *Suryanarayana*, Sun-God.

No disrespect should be shown to the sun. When going to the fields for a call of nature, the Kol never squats without first ascertaining where the sun is, and as far as possible keeps it always to his right. The back, the front, and especially the left hand should never be toward it at such times.

The Moon. Some Kols consider the moon a goddess, while others do not seem to regard it in the category of deity at all. They

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and new ones brought in. Metal vessels are not affected. Hindu influences are apparent.

Rivers. The Kols say that there are but two rivers in India which are really sacred, the Ganges and the Nerbudda. They put the Ganges in the first place. Like most Hindus, Kols believe that it is good to bathe in these rivers and that to do so will help to wash away sin and give one merit. Kols in the vicinity of Jubbulpore frequently go to the Nerbudda, but seldom to the Ganges.

GODS AND GODDESSES WORSHIPPED BY KOLS. The worship to which the Kols really give themselves is not that of the gods of the Hindu pantheon, nor the forces or the powers of nature, but rather of the village deities—*deotas* and *devis*—who are intimately connected with their daily life and outlook. The majority of these deities are female, and it is such deities that really count. They are termed "mothers," and many have *mai* meaning "mother" attached to their name. The male deities are called *babas*, "fathers"; or *deos*, "godlings."

The Kol Pantheon. Among Hindus the Supreme Being is worshipped as Vishnu by the Vaishnavas and as Siva by the Saivas. Others who worship the Supreme deity exclusively as a female principle are called Saktas. The wives of Vishnu or Siva may be worshipped as Lakshmi and Parvati, thus introducing the female principle. Nevertheless the *devi* is secondary to the *deva*. In the case of Sakti worship, the Devi is made supreme and the absolute Brahma from whom Brahma, Vishnu and Siva proceed, can do nothing without her activity. This form of religion is seen particularly in Tantra and Sakta Hinduism.

The goddess of the Saktas may be called by the general term "Devi," but is worshipped in many forms. Various aspects of her life or achievements are remembered under different names, and she even may assume the form of a male. The worship of Devi is usually associated with Siva, rather than Vishnu, and many of the concomitants of Saivitism are associated with her worship.

From the evidence that follows, which is largely from the lips of Kols, it would appear that the Devi principle is the main factor at work in the Kols' idea of deity. Khermai is occasionally given an all-inclusive aspect. Bhagavati is essentially Devi. She has "six sisters" who are really forms of herself.[1] Kols have never been

[1] "In all parts of South India the seven sisters are the most prominent among Dravidian deities." —Elmore, W. T., *Dravidian Gods in Modern Hinduism*, p. 19. He names the following as examples, though he notes their names vary from place to place: Poleramma, Ankamma, Muthyalamma, Dilli Polasi, Bangaramma, Mathamma and Renuka.

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able to name for us just who the six are, but the following are among those included : Athabhuji, Bhanmati, Bindajali, Bindra Basni, Bindawasnimai, Chandni, Chandika, Kalimai, Kalka, Khermai, Maridevi, and Shardamai. It is not unlikely that others may be brought under the same principle, for Khermai acts as village watchman and protector, as well as guardian against spirits, disease, and death. In this latter aspect, she does the work of Bairam, Jognimai, Mahamai, Maridevi, Phulmatimai and Sitalamai.

The following list of Kol deities can hardly be arranged in the order of their importance to the Kol and therefore are listed alphabetically. Of course no one group has given all these names in any one list, and there is much overlapping. Lists made on the field have never agreed either as to the number or their order in importance. Sometimes we were assured that a certain deity was the foremost of all, yet a few miles away her name was not even mentioned. A few of the deities stand out in importance, and are discussed at greater length. No pretence is made of giving all the information available elsewhere about the gods and goddesses found in the Kol pantheon and no detailed comparative study has been attempted. What is related below is based upon what Kols have told us and presents their point of view :

Female Deities.	*Male Deities.*
Alop	Bagbdeo.
Anjanidevi	Bahanar Singh Deo.
Asmanidevi (or mai)	Barandeo.
Athabhuji	Barum baba.
Bairam	Basdeo.
Barmati	Bhainsokhar.
Bhagavati	Bhaino.
Bhanmati	Bhainsasor.
Bindajali	Bhuiyan.
Bindra Basni	Burhadeo.
Bindawasnimai	Dulhadeo.
Burimai	Gurdayal.
Chandika	Gwalabansa baba.
Chandni	Hardaul.
Chithra devi	Khetrapal.
Desh hari	Mahabir.
Dhartimai	Mansa deo.
Hingiaj devi	Nanga baba.

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the point of an iron trident through the cheek or tongue or part of the skin of the neck, and ask the "candidate" to jump and run about with it in place. This is the final test, as it were, of the validity of the claim to be a Kol priest. Further on is a fuller description of the phenomenon of the *bonga*.[1]

Duties of the Priest. The duties of the priest are largely connected with the village shrine. He should keep it in order, offer the cocoanuts and animals, and perform the *hom* sacrifice. He is also the mouthpiece of the goddess. When possessed of the *devi* he is asked questions, and the answers that come from his mouth are not his, but are claimed to be the answers of the *devi* herself.

It is not infrequent that the *panda* is also expected to perform certain magical practices, although he is not as expert in these as the Baiga priest is believed to be. These practices are usually in connection with disease, but it may be any form of divination known to Kols. A child is ill, and the priest is asked for his help in healing the disease. The priest will go before the *devi* and vow to take no food for nine days, and after that to make a *jawara* offering. An earthen *ghara*, wheat and milk are given him. These he takes to the child's house and plants the wheat in the *ghara*. Sometimes this is done in his own house. The wheat is sprinkled daily with water and a little milk. It sprouts and grows, and in nine days, after being taken with ceremony to the village tank or a near-by stream, the earth is washed away. The wheat plants and the roots are then brought back to the house where the child is ill. If by this time the spirit causing the illness has not been satisfied, the wheat stalks and roots will surely satisfy her if left on the roof to dry. Like the stalks, the disease will dry up and disappear.

THE VILLAGE SHRINE. It was noted that each village has its central shrine. This, however, is not the only shrine in the village; there may also be other ones, but there is one which is recognized as the chief place of worship, and it is about this central shrine that the chief religious observances centre. The place of worship is a sanctuary of a god or goddess and not the place of public congregational worship. The pictures on plate xxiv show village shrines, and a ground plan in figure 26 is also given to show the disposition and arrangement of the various concomitants. Some shrines have more in them than others, and frequently a red *sendur* mark and cocoanut shells and ashes are the only sign that worship is carried on there. Hindu influences may be presumed.

1 See p. 188.

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RELIGIOUS FESTIVALS OF THE KOLS. The chief religious festivals that Kols have interest in are the following: 796

Amavasya—"No moon day." Monthly.
Dasara—on the tenth (*dasa*) day of the month Kunwar.
Dewali—lamp festival, first day of Kartik, twenty days after Dasara.
Hareli—"greenery", during the monsoon time: Srawan.
Hariyari—a form of Hareli.
Holi—the spring equinoctial festival in the month of Phag at full moon.
Jawara—twice a year: just before Holi and again before Dasara.
Khajleniya—a portion of the Jawara festival and sometimes a synonym for it.
Khicheri—named but not clearly differentiated.
Marpah—in memory of the dead.
Nagpanchami—the snake festival in Srawan.
Naodurgan—a part of the Jawara festival.
Phag—the same as Holi.
Pusan—a festival known in Rewa.
Rakhi—"protector", the ceremony of amulet tying. In Sawan.
Ramnavami—Ram's birthday, 9th day of Chaita.
Sirwani—another name for the Rakhi festival.
Tija—another name for Khajleniya.

These festivals however, are not all of equal value, but as far as possible we have given a description of them and of how the Kols enter into the same. Hindu influences are apparent. [177]

Amavasya. This is a monthly festival and is observed on the day when the moon is "new" that is, on the dark of the moon. It is only observed, however, by the more Hinduised Kols. As the new moon comes forth in its purity, all should be made ready to receive her. The women busy themselves in cleaning and plastering their houses, mending the holes or broken plaster, and making everything spick and span. The men may go to the Nerbudda to bathe. Among Hindus much attention is paid to Amavasya, and should it fall on Monday "it is sacred, people fast, bathe, make gifts to Brahmins, and worship the holy Fig tree."[1] In this connection the Kols will pluck off bits of their garments and throw them toward the moon, as described on previous pages.[2] The festival is apparently a Vedic one and needless 796 177 [821]

1 Crooke, W., *Religion & Folklore of Northern India*, p. 35.
2 See pp. 131, 136.

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796 177 to say, Kols living away from strong Hindu influences do not pay particular attention to this, although it is known and mentioned.

Dasara is a very important Hindu festival and is celebrated on the tenth day of the Hindu month *Kunwar*—portions of September and October. In this case again, the Kols enter into it quite freely, yet it is not one of their important festivals. The Hindu legends connected with this day seem to indicate that it is a day to celebrate a victory and hold military displays.

[788] Any observation among the Kols usually takes the form of a procession of men to the village boundary, carrying with them lights and torches, the procession being marked by the beating of drums and the singing of the men. From there they return home rejoicing as if from a victory, and are greeted by the women who have a feast ready.

It is also a semi-agricultural festival with some, as the wheat should not be sown till after *Dasara*. Ten days before *Dasara* wheat is sown in the houses. This is discussed in connection with the *Jawara* festival,[1] which seems to be the most important to the Kol and overlaps both *Dasara* and *Holi*.

[821] *Devali*. This is the feast of lights and comes twenty days after *Dasara*, and is held on the new moon day (*Amavasya*) of the Hindu month *Kartik* (October-November). This too is predominantly a Hindu festival, and the Kols observance is largely by imitation. Hindus set out lights, and the illuminations, particularly in cities [775] where it is well observed, are very beautiful. The Hindu believes that on this night the souls of the good dead return to visit their old haunts. So the houses are made ready—all is clean; old earthen lamps are thrown away and new ones replace them. The new ones should burn all night, and the family will stay up to receive the spirits of their deceased, not yet reborn.

Kols usually go no further than first burning a *diya* inside the house in front of the inner place of worship, invoking, they say, Shardamai, though the names of all the gods and goddesses known to them should be uttered before the shrine, as well as the names of their own sainted dead. Then the lamp is taken up and together with a few others is set on the doorstep to guide the spirit. If the Kol has any wealth, he may worship that too; but there is usually so little that they do not take it into account.

Hareli. The word literally means "greenery", and it appears that only the Hinduized Kols have much knowledge of it. Among

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orthodox Hindus each passage of the sun from one constellation to another is marked by some kind of ceremony. The change after the sun has reached its most northern course coincides with the coming of the welcome monsoon rains, which turn the dry and dusty lands into a paradise of green. Russell and Hiralal also note that the Kurmis, an agricultural caste in the Central Provinces, keep this festival in the month of *Srawan* (July-August).[1]

Hariyari. This has been named to us by Kols and is probably very similar to, if not identical with, the *Hareli* festival. Crooke has a few words by way of information: "Bhuiyas, Kols, and Binds of the United Provinces also worship during the rainy season Haryari Devi, 'Mother of Greenery', by employing their Baiga priest to sacrifice chickens and to pour a libation of wine on the field after harvest or before the sowing season."[2]

Holi. This festival is usually called *Phag* by Kols as it occurs in the month of *Phagun* (February-March). It is essentially a spring festival, largely entered into and carried on by the lower castes. It marks the coming of spring, and the sympathetic magic in the ceremony tends to promote the fertility of crops and animals.

Kols who live in or near cities and towns observe this more than those isolated in villages. In Rewa a group of Kols claimed that they would not particularly observe it, but Kols near Jubbulpore said that those who remained behind in Rewa observed it much more fully than they who had left and come away.

Preparations for the *Phag* festival were watched in a Kol village close to Jubbulpore, and our enquiries were freely answered. The first part of the festival centres around a great bonfire which is arranged much as Hindu castes construct it. This should always be built outside the village and eastwards, towards the rising sun. If one Kol village cannot get up enough enthusiasm for a good celebration, they may join with another village in their preparations, or several villages may join together. The wood for the fire may be taken by force or stolen from its owners, and the owners are not supposed to make any protest.

The place chosen for the fire is first cleared and levelled. In the centre a hole is dug, into which the pole, around which the wood is to be stacked, will be inserted. Two pice, some *haldi* and a *supari* nut are dropped into the hole. The central pole should be of *andi* wood, the castor oil stalk (*Palma christi*), and around this the wood, brush and other inflammable materials are laid. The larger the pile the more

1 Russell and Hiralal, *Tribes and Castes*, Vol. IV. p. 94.
2 Crooke, W., *Op. Cit.*, p. 265.

1:Griffiths M-5 (ca. 1940) 1946 AW37 Kol AW37

796 successful the ceremony. Last of all the whole is covered with a layer of dry grass.

[177] 793 [821] The time for the actual lighting is learned from the Hindu *pandit* who knows horoscopy and can tell it exactly. Theoretically the pile should be lighted at full moon, when the sun and the moon are exactly in opposition. This may occur before sunset, and if so, the pile should be lighted as soon as dusk has fallen. It was to be lighted in the case we investigated at 3 a.m. When the hour has come, all who take [522] part in the festivities gather round the sacred pile with much laughing and vulgar jesting. A cocoanut is usually broken just as the fire is touched off. The fire is lit from burning cow dung cakes; and before [237] touched off, it is carried by the *panda* seven times around the pile 372] which is always kept to his right, so that he goes clockwise about it. The glowing cow dung cakes are then inserted into the wood and grass drawn over it, and the fire begins. One should never blow upon this fire to get it started. It should be fanned, but never blown from the mouth. Now the whole group will circumambulate the fire in a clockwise direction, throwing wheat or other gifts into it. Later on, as the fire dies down, some daring youths may jump over it or run through it. As the group goes about the fire, they shout: "*Hori ha, Hori mata*, take thou this wheat our *Hori mata*." *Hori* is used for *Holi*. Singing is kept up all night, and more wood may be thrown upon the fire. [583]

796 With the lighting of the fire, the obscenity of this festival is loosened, and may be resorted to all night and the next day. Obscene 786 songs of the *Kabiri* type in which the sexual act is described with 831 appropriate gestures are sung. These are not directed against any particular individual, and no offense should be taken by anyone. A woman may snatch away a bit of the clothes of a man known to her, such as his cap or *pagri* or cloth flung over his shoulder. He must give her a present before he can recover it, and the hat should be filled with *gur* (raw sugar) and sweets before he can get it back. Sexual license is permitted at this time.

[787] Certain prophecies about the coming harvest are made by observing the way the fire burns, the smoke rises, and how it is carried away by the wind.

On the day following liberties of all kinds are taken with people. Dust, mud, dirt, and water coloured red, are thrown over passers-by. Sugar garlands are exchanged and indecent remarks passed. *Kabiri* [533] songs and others celebrating Krishna's love affairs are sung. The more shameless a lowcaste man can be, the more lustily he is cheered by his companions. There is no redress for those insulted on this

1:Griffiths M-5 (ca. 1940) 1946 AW37 Kol AW37

occasion, as such acts are not considered really reprehensible if done during *Holi*.

Jawara. This is the most important of the festivals observed by the Kols and while linked to Hindu observances, is nevertheless probably a much more primitive affair than many Hindu ceremonies. The *Jawara* festival comes twice a year, in the Spring in the Hindu month of *Chaita* (March-April), and the Fall in the month of *Kunwar* (September-October). The former begins on the first day of the Hindu year in the month *Chaita*, and lasts for nine days ending on *Ramnavami* or the birthday of Rama. In the Fall it comes during the first nine days of *Kunwar* and ends just before *Dasara* on the tenth of *Kunwar*. The Fall festival comes just before the sowing of the winter crop of wheat, and the Spring festival comes just after it has been reaped.

The *Jawara* festival is entered into by the Kols with great enthusiasm, and it is during this period that the *bawa* or spirit possession is most common. During the nine days of the festival, singing, dancing and the beating of drums are kept up almost incessantly after nightfall.

It is called *Jawara* festival after the *juari* plant, a large millet, *Sorghum vulgare*. As this is not grown to a great extent in Central India, it is more usual to find that wheat rather than *jawar* is used in the ceremonies. On the first day of the nine days' celebration, a room or portion of a room is plastered and made ready for the sowings. A ceremonial bath should be taken first, and the one who plants the wheat should care for it the rest of the nine days. The wheat is then sown in small earthen vessels or sometimes in leaf dishes filled with earth, which is well-manured so that the wheat will grow nicely. It is watered daily and a few drops of milk are sprinkled over it in order to make it grow even better. The water should never be put on the plants directly from the hand, preferably the roots of a barley plant should be dipped into the water and thus it is sprinkled upon the growing plants. The vessels are kept indoors and probably not far from one of the household goddesses. It is said that all Kols do not sow this wheat, only those whose forefathers did so, or perhaps also those who have made some vow before a deity.

During the nine days of this celebration almost all the Kol deities are invoked and worshipped, and there is much singing before the village shrines, and *bawas* are common. The eighth night is the one most likely for a *bawa*, for that night all the people in the village are required to fast. During the nine days, the person caring for the wheat should fast in the evenings. The long stalks have sprung up by this time and are now ready to be taken out.

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walk from one end to the other. In the evening the big meal is enjoyed by all alike.

Khichri or *Khichhrihai* is a simple festival, apparently one of fellowship when one should invite some friend to a meal and eat rice and *dal* which was boiled together. It comes several times a year.[1]

Marpak is a festival in memory of the dead. It has its Hindu influences and only the male members of the family go to a river where there is a Hindu *nai* and priest. The *nai* shaves their heads and beards and they go to the *ghat* to bathe. After this they visit the Brahmin who is sitting by the edge of the water. A few annas are given to him and holding up some water cupped in his hands, he mutters the name of the dead and recites some sacred texts. For the next few days whenever taking a bath or washing clothes, the Kol should do likewise and offer water in the name of his deceased. A leaf plate is put out either on the roof of the house or in a niche in the wall in front of the veranda. See plate xx. In this foods such as *puris*, *bhat*, *dal* and *bara* are put.

Nagpanchami. This is the worship of the serpent as symbolized particularly by the Cobra or *Nag*. This festival occurs on the fifth day of *Sawan* (July-August). Its institution is aptly described by Underhill :[2]

"This day celebrates the return of Krishna from the Yamuna after having overcome the big river snake Kaliya. Krishna had fallen into the river from a tree overhanging the bank, into which he had climbed to fetch a ball which had lodged there while he was playing with the herds people. His return with the snake was received with joy, the herdsmen offering Kaliya milk in gratitude for his not having harmed their favourite, Krishna.....

Another legend says that a man, ignorant of the festival, while ploughing on this day killed a nest of young snakes. The mother snake, in revenge, in the night bit the man and all his family, except one married daughter living in another village. Having killed all but this daughter, the mother snake set out for that village to kill her also. But the girl, knowing of the festival, had put out a dish of appetising food, which the snake tasted, and which gratified her so much that she not only refrained from killing the girl, but gave her a healing lotion to sprinkle on the bodies of the parents and other children, whereby they were all restored to life. After this, the festival became general."

1. Elwin also finds this festival among the Baigas and thinks they took it from the Gonds. He calls it a children's festival. The children beg rice and cook it by the riverside. *The Baigas*, p. 62.
2. Underhill, M. M., *The Hindu Religious Year*, p. 122.

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796 825 Kols everywhere observe this festival. On the fourth day of *Sawan* or *Srawan* they should observe a fast which ends with a feast on the fifth day. On the morning of the fifth day Kols worship some symbol of *Nag* and put out saucers of milk near termite hills and other places where snakes have been seen or suspected. No digging or ploughing is done this day lest the snakes be disturbed or injured. [574] Sometimes the women do no grinding or cutting. In the evening there is a big feast of "*puris, sewai, bara,* milk and sugar."

796 [776] *Naodurgan.* Literally, "Nine Durgas." This refers to the *Jawara* festival noted above, and is especially connected with the one observed in the fall. Kols say it is observed in remembrance of the nine *devis.* Durga *devi* is the eldest and eight more accompany her. Hindus usually speak of this as *Naoratri* or Nine Nights.

Phag. This is the same as the *Holi* festival, which we have described.

Pusan. In Rewa it was said that this was held in the month of *Pus* (December-January). This may be a variation of the so called [574] *Khichri* festival, for at this time Kols say they worship no particular *devi,* but have a feast with some friends.

796 789 [164] *Rakhi.* "Protector." The full title of this festival is *Rakhibandhana,* "amulet tying." This ceremony is performed in the month of *Sawan* (July-August). This is probably the most unhealthful season of the year in the villages, a time when malaria is very common, and something must be done to ward off illness. A coloured cord decorated with tinsel is tied to the wrist; husbands should tie one on the wrists of the wife and the wife on the husband, sisters on the wrists of brothers and *vice versa.*

[177 773] This festival is based upon the Hindu legend from the *Bhavishyottara Purana* in which the story is told of the earth, men and gods being under the power and tyranny of the great King Bali, who, by his devotion to Siva, had gained enough merit and power to rule. Before Vishnu became incarnated as the Dwarf Vamana and subsequently conquered him, it was necessary to have some kind of protection from this demon. Vishnu gave Indrani, the wife of Indra, a coloured silken thread which was tied by her about Indra's wrists, and thus he secured protection from Bali.

796 177 *Ramnavami* is the birthday of Rama and comes on the ninth day of the month of *Chaita* (March-April). This coincides with the ninth day of the spring *Jawara* festival, and is the Hinduised term a Kol may use to describe the doings that night. See under *Jawara.*

796 789 184 *Sirwani.* This is another name for the *Rakhi* festival. *Sirwani*

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Chapter IX

MAGIC AND WITCHCRAFT

The Kols are fundamentally a primitive tribe, even though they have been for many years in contact with Hindu thought and life. It will be found therefore that they have outlooks which are properly termed animistic. This does not necessarily imply that their thought forms are simple and that a 'primitive' people have a 'primitive' outlook. Kol thought, though not philosophic, is complex and involved, and has behind it a long history. These beliefs are not limited to 'primitive' people either, but are shared with other groups living about them, and extend up into the very fabric of the thinking of intelligent Indians.

There are certain forces which are opposing this point of view, such as education, travel, books, and modern inventions, to say nothing of contacts with higher Hinduism and the political movements of the day. There are many ancient institutions such as caste, the authority of the Brahmins, and idolatry, which are being questioned at the present time; and these questionings have their repercussions among the villages and tend toward a sophisticated attitude toward many of the beliefs described below.

There are other forces which aid in the maintenance of animistic outlooks: ignorance of what is going on tends toward the *status quo*; women among the Kols are universally illiterate and are the stronghold of the old ways. Many a Kol says that he puts on charms for his wife's sake, but adds that he really does not believe that they do much good. Custom is another force very difficult to move. It is very strong over India and its persistence, in spite of knowledge to the contrary, is a thing which strikes an observer. Belief may change, but custom, though rationalized, remains as before.

A word of caution should be uttered concerning generalities in regard to animistic thought. There are few, if any, perfectly consistent generalizations which may be made concerning Kol beliefs and outlooks. For example, when the spirit world is described, one should not immediately conclude that *all* Kols enter into these concepts, any more than one should judge that all westerners regard the number thirteen with superstitious fear.

The Spirit World. To the average Kol all things animate and inanimate may be the abode of spirits of one sort or another.

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757 278 *Burns*: charcoal dust is sprinkled over the burn from time to time. This should cake on it to be effective.

Chest Colds: mustard oil (from *Guizotia abyssinica*) is rubbed over the chest.

[262] *Colds*: care should be observed regarding food. Only foods that give warmth to the body should be taken, such as grams, molasses, fish, and chicken curry.

Diarrhoea: the seeds of *mumri* (or *mamira*) are soaked in water and the solution given to the patient.

Eye Complaints: a solution containing onion juice and raw sugar (*gur*) from sugar cane, (*Saccharum officinarum*) is prepared which is called *bulni lal* due to its pinkish colour. The eye is washed in this solution.

Fever: a shrub known as *gataran* (*Caesalpinia bonducella*) is very useful for this. Some leaves and fruit from this plant should be boiled in water and the solution given to the person ill. If it is an ordinary fever, not due to an evil spirit, this should reduce it.

Leaves of the *nim* tree (*Melia azadirachta*) boiled in water is also an efficacious remedy in ordinary fevers.

[752] *Fractures*: a broken bone should be fomented with hot *ghi* (clarified butter) and *haldi*. (*Curcuma longa*), mixed together. Sometimes ordinary splints are applied, and when this is done leaves and portions of the skin of the *hajor* (*Cissus quadrangularis*) plant should be put under the splints.

Headaches: *hurhur* (*Celeome vissosa*) is ground and the juice extracted. This juice is put into the ears. The juice of the *bhelwa* nut (*Semecarpus anacardium*) is occasionally used. This is the marking nut and its juice causes a burn and a great deal of counter irritation, and leaves a scar that persists.

Itch: bits of the root and the bark of the *nim* tree are ground together and made into a paste which is applied to the affected parts.

Another remedy is oil from the seeds of the *Kanji* tree (*Pongamiaglabra*). This is rubbed on.

[753 177] *Malaria*: malaria is not attributed to spirits; possibly it may be that it is too recent a phenomenon to have been considered as such. The leaves of the *nim* tree are boiled in water and administered.

There is a climbing creeper called *gurj* (*Menispermum glabrum*) which may be used for malaria. The wood and bark of this plant is ground up and put into water. A heated tile is

1;Griffiths M-5 (ca.1940) 1946 AW37 Kol AW37

In a "yellow skin disease", probably a form of jaundice, the following procedure may be pursued: One should take some *til* oil and pour it into a brass *lota*. A sickle or knife is waved over this to frighten off any influences which might affect the magical powers resulting from the act to be performed. When it is believed that all the spirits have passed from the region of the cup, the sick man is asked to gaze into the oil and catch his reflection. If he can do this, the disease enters the oil in the cup and may be thrown out, no longer to work harm on the person concerned. 755

LUCK AND OMENS. There are auspicious and inauspicious days to be observed and taken into account. In the Hindu month there are five unlucky days which, however, vary from month to month; and the Kol, if he cares to, can find these out by consulting a *pandit*. Nothing new should be started on those days, nor a journey begun, nor any wedding preparations undertaken. Some days of the week are more auspicious than others. Kols believe the best days to be, in the order of their merit; Monday, Wednesday, Thursday and Saturday. Tuesday, Friday and Sunday are the least desirable, but these days are not really bad, it is usually added, but just inauspicious. On Sunday, for example, discussions should be avoided, as such are likely to become heated and quarrels ensue. 777 [177] [521]

Omens should be taken into account, particularly when any new work is being started, as well as during the marriage preparations and at the beginning of a journey. Often a Kol sets forth on a trip to town and returns home not long after he has started. He probably came across some inauspicious happenings, and if the trip should be of a doubtful nature, and he does not quite understand its significance, he will be on the lookout for all kinds of omens. Kols have often promised to come to our stopping places and discuss matters with us, but they have failed to show up. The reason probably lay in the fact that they could not quite figure out why we wanted them, even though we thought we made it clear, and as they started out some omens presented themselves—omens which they probably would never have noted on ordinary occasions, and so they remained at home. 787

Among good omens the following may be named:

Passing four people seated together.
Meeting a Brahmin just as one starts out.
Passing a vessel filled with water or grain.
Observing a burning lamp by the wayside.
Seeing a woman carrying a healthy male child.

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and fearful for at least twelve years. Usually such spirits are not dangerous, and some have said that after twelve years they go to Bhagawan or may be born into the world again. 762 775

Sometimes the woman may die in childbirth and the child be born alive. If so, it is thought very likely that the child owes its life to an evil spirit, who desires it for some evil purpose, and hence the child may really be a *bhut*. It is very difficult to get a wet nurse for such children and they usually do not survive very long. 845 776 775

We happened to be in a Kol village a few hours after an earthquake and we asked a group what caused the movement of the earth. Nearly all at once agreed that the earth shook because of *pap*, or sin. One or two though, began to think and said that the real reason was that the earth rested upon the heads of *Nag*—a many-headed serpent, and that once in twelve years he had to shift the earth from one head to another and that produced an earthquake. But when confronted with the obvious fact that an earthquake came oftener than once in twelve years they were puzzled and could not account for it. The latter explanation is the one frequently advanced among Hindus, but Kols were not very familiar with it. 823 [773 177]

Rain, so intimately connected with the welfare of forest people, may often be brought to pass by magical processes, and there are frequent instances of this among the tribes and castes of Central Provinces. In many of these rites nudity is an essential part, for moved by pity at their representation of poverty, Indra or some rain *devta* will grant refreshing showers. No trace of nudity practices was found among the Kols. The more sophisticated Kol believes that rain is sent only by Indra, the Vedic god of rain, and that it is only through a Brahmin that the gift of rain may be secured. 821 [291] [177]

Some Kols use frogs in an attempt to bring the rains. Frogs and rains are intimately associated in their minds, for in the weeks that precede the coming of the monsoon, the frogs croak long and loudly, and it is thought that their calls bring the showers. So if the monsoon is delayed and there is a drouth, Kol boys will round up all the frogs they can. The larger they are the better for this purpose. A thread is tied round the leg of each frog and they are then dragged about the village. As they pass by houses the people living there come out and sprinkle a bit of water over them. The boys and their frogs finally end up at the village shrine and the latter are tied before the *devi*. It is said that the croaking of the frogs at the shrine will affect the *devi* resident there and she too will long for cooling showers, so she gets to work and uses her influence and power to help bring the rain to pass. 821 825 789

1:Griffiths M-5 (ca. 1940) 1946 AW37 Kol AW37

what reluctant to repeat them unless they are sung under emotional excitement.

6. *Kabiri*. This is another obscene type sung mostly at the *holi* season. It is said that the sexual act is described with obscene gestures. Kols say that it is called Kabiri as Kabirdas made and sang them. This is certainly a fiction. There may, however, be some Moslem influence in the songs, though this is open to doubt.[1]

7. *Dohari*. A type of song in which the verses are made up of two lines. The word comes from *doha* meaning a couplet. The full dohari has twelve couplets of two lines each.

8. There have been some other types and varieties of types named by Kols, but no information about them seems to be available and Kols themselves do not know the niceties of them. Among such may be mentioned Kotwerhai, Bhumhai, Kolhai (said to be a form of the *dadar*), Badhwa, Katili, Birha, Bihari, Chhauhar and Barahmasi. Examples of most of these kinds will be found below.

Those songs are sung by both men and women, though on certain occasions one of these groups may do the most of the singing. Women, for example, do all the singing on the sixth night after birth (*Chhatthi*); both sing at the time of wedding; at the periods of special religious worship it is generally the men who do the singing, although it is not unknown for the women to take a part.

KOL SONGS. Most of the songs sung by Kols are composed for special occasions, and the following songs are selected from a number collected by us in our visits among the Kols. They give an interesting insight into the Kol outlook on life. One finds the joys and sorrows of youth and love. An appreciation of nature is also evident, while many of the songs border on what many would consider indecent and questionable. Many songs centre about Ram and his victory over Rawana. Only a few of these are included. In Appendix III brief notations on certain of the songs will be found. The meanings of some of the songs are obscure and in many of them there are insinuations not easily grasped. In some cases only the composers, probably, know to what the songs allude and any translation is far from satisfactory. It is believed that the songs which follow are fairly typical of Kol songs in general. They are arranged topically in the main, though some songs fall into more than one classification. There are six divisions: 1. Songs of Nature; 2. Life: its Joys and Sorrows;

1 How Kabir's name came to be associated with these songs is a mystery. Kabir's songs are highly respectable and well-thought of. See above page 46.

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Kya jano maya sukhi ke khanewale.
Garewa bharae apa ke liye—garewa ka ghatona,
Kya jano tumari ke pinewale.
Biriya banaewa apa ke liya—biriya ruchana,
Kya jano mayapalla ke khanewale.
Seja bichhaonwa apa ke liya—sejiya sona,
Kya jano gudri ke sonewale.

O dwellers in jungle, what do you know of singing and music?
I have cooked for you,—but how poor you make it out, for you have dry food always.
I have water ready for you,—but alas, will it please you? You who drink water from gourds?
Pan is ready too,—but you who use the leaves of the forest, can you enjoy this tender treat?
A bed is ready for you,—but tell me true:
How will you ever rest on such, O sleepers on rugs!

535 [462 562] DANCES. Dancing is found in connection with all happy occasions: births, weddings, feasts and festivals, but among the Kols it is only the women who dance. The men play and sing, but it is universally claimed that they never dance; it is considered effeminate to do so, for eunuchs dance, and since Kols are men they should not dance. In other groups among whom the Kols live, such as the Gonds and even the outcaste groups, the men-folk dance.

There is one main type of dance among Kols called by the same name as the songs that are sung with it: the *dadra*. There are various forms of this dance, differing somewhat in rhythm and also in movement. To the casual observer they look almost the same, but to the Kol there are real differences. The *purani chal* and the [578] *shaitani* are forms of the *dadra*. The word *shaitani* is literally 'satanic' or 'devilish' and in this form the words sung are very abusive [583] and suggestive. On the occasion of such a dance with its accompanying songs, youths and maidens often elope.

[177] The famous *karma* dance of the Gonds, in which both men and women participate, is not danced by the Kols, though they know of it and have often watched it. Russell and Hiralal however, claim [114] that the Kols dance it.[1]

1 *Op. Cit.*, Vol. III, p. 317.

1;Griffiths M-5 (ca. 1940) 1946 AW37 Kol AW37

pounds of wheat for a day's work in the field. If a cash arrangement is entered into, the rate is 1½ annas for the same period of labour. In urban areas the situation is better. In 1911 the average wage was four annas a day. In 1921 it was six annas and ten years later it had increased to nine annas. It was our belief that seven years later wages had considerably fallen. Kol labourers in Jubbulpore industrial plants seldom received more than 5½ annas per day while for the same work in Katni and Maihar they received but four annas. As a rule women workers received about half the above.

It should be kept in mind that we have with the Kols the phenomenon of a primitive and backward people coming into the stream of rural and urban life. Many changes have occurred and many more will take place in the future.

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT. Kol people live together in groups, either in a section of the village or in a village of their own. Taking the village as a whole it would appear that they are economically well below the average. In certain places, however, they seem to be making a distinct advance as they continue to dwell there and develop a place for themselves in the life of the community. A resident of Barela, not himself a Kol, said that he had been watching them for many years. He said that twenty-five to thirty years ago they were very backward compared to their present condition. At that time they lived in grass huts, wore only loin cloths and in every respect were jungly, backward and inferior; but now the majority of Kols in Barela have houses with tiled roofs and thick mud walls, although the earlier type of dwelling is still occasionally found. This is indicated in Plate V. They now put on better clothing and in general their economic standard seems to be rising. In another place we found Kols putting tiles on their roofs which normally cost Rs. 20 per 1,000. These were being laid on top of the grass thatch. Country tile is more generally used and it costs from ten to twelve rupees to cover the house in this manner. Whenever the Kols are in contact with a somewhat higher culture and have a sense of security as regards lands and tenancy, they tend to make their houses much better than otherwise. Whenever we have asked groups why they have built and are living in such crude houses, they have told us that they do not know from one day to the next whether they will be staying there; and if they have to move on tomorrow they can easily pull up and leave. It is also said that this was the way their forefathers dwelt, and why should they do otherwise. Their employment is very uncertain and hence their houses are crude.

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Kol Tribe	Number per 1,000 earners engaged in each occupation
Artisans and other workers ..	22
Labourers, boatmen, cartmen, *palki* bearers, etc. ..	19
Trade ..	12
Domestic service ..	11
Contractors, clerks, cashiers, etc. otherwise unspecified ..	17
Labourers, unspecified ..	157
Other occupations ..	27[1]

463 177 [156] [427] 463 [439] [427] [276 824] [461] Our own investigations show that the Kols enter into the modern economic world more easily than other primitive tribes such as the Gonds. While there are scores of Gond villages in and around Jubbulpore, the Gonds are shy and retiring and are only seen in the town on bazaar days when they come to buy and exchange some of their forest produce. The Kols are not bad mixers, seem to like company, and have entered into the industrial life of the city quite readily. We did not find the Kols limited to any particular occupation. They are unusually good workers and wherever we went we found this fact mentioned about them. We found a few who are farmers and who hold small pieces of land from the *malguzar*. Others are farm workers and follow the crops; and during the time of the wheat harvest some Kol villages and *mahallas* are almost entirely deserted. Many of the Kols living in a town not far from Jubbulpore are road-workers, breaking the stone for the roadway and doing the required labour in repairing it. Others in Barela burn and sell charcoal; some Kols buy wood from the Gonds, cut it into convenient lengths and resell it in Jubbulpore. In Khajara Ghat, a purely Kol village about eight miles from Jubbulpore and quite inaccessible and isolated, the Kols seem independent, raising all their own food-stuffs and paying their *malguzari* rents by means of the proceeds from the sale of wood and of the leaves of the *tendu* plants (*Diospyros embryopteris, melanoxylon, montana, etc.*), used in the manufacture of country cigarettes or *biris*. No one in this village was said to be engaged in hard labour for others, known as coolie work. In other places we found indication that they can quite readily turn their hands to mechanical work. A few are so engaged in the factories in Jubbulpore. We watched Kols

[1] *Ibid.*, p. 288.

1;Griffiths M-5 (ca. 1940) 1946 AW37 Kol AW37

178 291 [126] presence of men they usually cover their heads with their *saris*. It was difficult to get, for the anthropometric data, photographs of Kol women with their heads uncovered.

177 178 793 585 [558] SOCIAL CHANGES. In the social realm there are certain important changes which may be noted and yet there is a persistence in the older ways. This is characteristic of much of Indian life. Even fifty years ago the Brahmin priest was called for some Kol weddings and some other groups did not call him. The same holds true today, though now-a-days to call the *pandit* is the "right" thing to do, and those who do not call him, but manage things themselves, are looked down upon. Outside of the marriage cycle the Brahmin priest is nowhere else absolutely essential to Kol life, though occasional use is made of him at the name-giving ceremony and the throwing of ashes into the rivers Ganges or Nerbudda.

178 564 [177] It appears that there is a definite hardening of the social divisions within the Kol tribe. The Kols are apparently forming a miniature caste system within the tribe somewhat modelled after Hindu caste. These groups are endogamous and interdining is forbidden and in general they take the form of true castes[1]. If a Kol is asked about his race, he will probably not answer Kol, but give the subcaste: Rautiya, Thakuriya or another. Kols are very particular about their sub-divisions, and while there is some evidence available to show a desire to break down these distinctions, the main interest seems to be in their preservation. The system seems to be hardening and more firmly entrenched than ever. In discussing this, one Kol gathering said that they were trying to discourage this group consciousness and they were encouraging (1) intermarriage and (2) interdining. They felt that this was the proper order. As yet, however, to their knowledge, no actual cases of intermarriage or interdining had occurred.

177 HINDUIZATION. The process of Hinduization is essentially a social phenomenon. Considerable attention has been paid to Hindu influence in passing and the matter may be summed up here. Throughout the centuries and up till the present time there has been a persistent movement of primitive tribes into Hinduism. They have not come by conversion but by absorption. The term Hindu is very elastic and it often happens that a member of one of these primitive races does not know whether he is a Hindu or not. There has been no

1 Blunt, in *The Caste System of Northern India*, states that there are three characteristics of a caste: Heredity, Endogamy, and restrictions on Commensality. (pp. 1-2).

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exact criterion of Hinduization, and the Census reports from year to year, while attempting to distinguish between members of primitive tribes who are Hindu and those who are followers of Tribal Religions, are not to be relied upon.

In its contact with more primitive religions Hinduism has steadily absorbed their beliefs and practices and has made them its own. All over Central India, Hinduism in the villages is hardly to be distinguished from the 'animism' of the primitive tribes. There may be a different terminology, the 'Hindu' may give the name of a Hindu deity as his god or goddess, but his worship of it is akin to the worship of the primitive people about him. The Census of 1931 made the surprising returns of tribal religion by a Bania, four Brahmins, three Gossins, three Kurmis, and a few others. These came from backward tracts and had been living among primitive peoples and worshipping their gods. Outside of this tract they would have called themselves Hindus.

No really satisfactory attempts have been made to determine whether a tribe or caste is truly Hindu or how far Hinduization has progressed. The Census Report of the United Provinces for 1931[1] presents criteria to determine whether or not a man is a Hindu and comments that if these tests are to be accepted they reveal almost no movement toward Hinduism in the past twenty years.

It would appear that the Hinduization of the primitive tribes will eventually lead to their becoming a part of the Hindu social system and then being integrated into its lower strata and becoming regarded by Hindus as outcastes or scheduled classes. This seems to have widely occurred in the United Provinces where tribes have not been able to isolate themselves in mountain and forests and have thus been thrown into close contact with Hinduism. It was previously noted that this same fact is also true of Chota Nagpur, where, in spite of a strong Munda environment, some groups from this racial stock are now classed as untouchables and must be counted along with them.

At the present time, the Kols, though Hinduized to a considerable extent, are not yet counted among the outcaste and scheduled groups except in the United Provinces and their Hindu neighbours in Central India do not consider them unclean. In Central Provinces there are the Gandas and the Pankas, aboriginal peoples who have lost their identity and who have become recognized throughout the Provinces by the Hindus as untouchables. Throughout the years the gradual cultural changes and stratification have brought them to the lower strata of Hindu society.

1 *Census of India* 1931 : XVIII : pp. 516—517.

1:Griffiths M-5 (ca. 1940) 1946 AW37 Kol AW37

177 178 It has been noted that one of the evidences of the tribal groups becoming Hinduized was the abandonment of forest life and migratory methods of cultivation and the settling down in villages. This the Kols seem to have done in a large part of Central India. Today they generally live in small hamlets of their own, and oftener than not these are attached to larger villages. They appear to have totally abandoned *Bewar* cultivation, the method of burning off some of the jungle, planting seeds in the scratched ashes, and moving on to some newly burnt place the following year. The Government has either stopped this altogether, or limited the area in which this can be done. [166] Most of the primitive tribes used to practise this. Even now though they live in villages there is still considerable seasonal migration. The villages near Jubbulpore are almost deserted in late March and April when the wheat is being harvested throughout the Nerbudda Valley. On our way to Rewa State at the end of April we passed hundreds of Kols along the Old Deccan road returning northwards to their homes in Rewa. They had their wives and new-born children with them, and were carrying their meagre possessions slung on the ends of bamboo poles across the shoulders. See plate XXIX.

The Kols do not admit that they are abandoning their tribal gods, or that they are accepting higher Hindu deities. As we have seen, they know very little of these higher deities other than their name, but feel that they have always known them. [171] The actual worship of the Kol centres around the more primitive type of animistic ideology, modified, no doubt, by years of contact with other groups.

177 There is a real question whether the word "Hinduization" is really an accurate one to describe the process. The movement is not a one-way process. Mundas *are* becoming "Hinduized", but Hinduism itself owes much to more primitive religions for it has constantly borrowed from them and unconsciously absorbed many of their concepts and practices. [171] The religious life of the Kol is much akin to the villager who calls himself a Hindu. Yet both are very unlike the "Aryan religion". For example, is the burning of the dead a Munda or a Hindu phenomenon? Generally it is thought of as a Hindu way of disposing of the dead, and it is overlooked that some Hindu sects bury their dead. But the earliest accounts of the Mundas show that they, too, did both[1].

CONCLUDING REMARKS. The Kols of today have been strongly influenced by Hinduism, but seemingly have not come much into contact with other faiths. It has been noted that they are found

1 Dalton, E. T., *Descriptive Ethnology of Bengal.*

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among the most illiterate of the land. Up till now Christian Missions have started no work among them and there has been no attempt from any quarter to give them adequate facilities and opportunities whereby they may make some cultural advancement. There is great need for the improvement of their social and economic environment.

It would be wrong, however, to assume that the Kols are indifferent or that their aspirations are dormant. There are stirrings among them, which, unfortunately, have been taken advantage of by unscrupulous people. They are seeking for religious recognition, and we have traced two attempts, one near Jubbulpore, and the other near Katni, to erect Kol "temples". In both cases wide appeals were circulated and fairly large sums of money collected. In the first case not a single stone was laid and some thousands of rupees were swindled. Near Katni they had got as far as the foundation and plinth when the funds gave out.[1] We were accompanied by five Kols to this project about which they were very enthusiastic. Our interest in it stimulated them greatly. They complained that nobody cared for Kols and that Hindus thought of them as coolies who had no self-respect; so they wanted to show the world that they are really worthy of recognition. They were very self-conscious about this matter. It was said that if they can only reveal their real spirit and show that they are truly interested in religious things, then Hindus must respect them and no longer despise them. They showed a pathetic eagerness for this recognition and were pleased with our visit. They made the claim that so far, not one person outside their own community, had shown the least concern for their welfare, and that in spite of their conscientious and earnest work, no one recognized nor knew them.

As a tribe the Kols are self-respecting and industrious. They are cheerful in disposition and greatly enjoy social fellowship. We found them open-hearted and ready to answer questions when once their confidence had been gained. Like most primitive tribes they are honest and trustworthy. That they have deep emotional feelings can be seen from their music and songs. They enjoy nothing better than a long evening of song and drum. We found but little evidence of their disobedience to the rules of the tribal codes of morality.

Taken all in all the Kols are a lovable people and as one comes into intimate contact with them he feels that much ought to be done to alleviate many of the difficulties and handicaps under which they bravely carry on.

In their case it is difficult to make recommendations for the future. For years Kols have been gradually losing their identity as an

1 See plate XXVIII.

1;Griffiths M-5 (ca. 1940) 1946 AW37 Kol AW37

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aboriginal tribe. They are becoming assimilated into the caste system of the Hindus, and like others before them, may one day have to take their place as a caste or a series of castes, and would most likely find their place among the groups considered unclean. Their society as a whole will then be integrated into Hinduism and their future will be bound up with the Hindu system.

In the years to come the Kols will probably maintain many things found in their present culture, for example, their love for music and the *dholak*. Without the long evenings of song, life would take on an added drabness for them. And yet, their Hindu neighbours often bring pressure upon them to stop their drumming.

It would hardly do to set apart a definite area for the Kols. There is no place where they predominate in a manner to make this possible. Their nature is a roving one, they would not take kindly to a reservation, and one would not keep them together nor preserve their tribal life any more than many of the reservations for American Indians have done.

The Kols suffer from the exploiter[1]. More might be done for them in cooperative schemes, but there again the area is too large for any single scheme embracing the tribe as a whole. Schemes ought to be framed that would, in selected areas, take in other tribal groups as well.

Possibly much could be done for the tribe if their illiteracy could be reduced. The type of education provided for village India is not suitable for the villager, to say nothing of the Kol tribe. Their lack of education leaves them at the mercy of exploiters, and even though they are in the majority, still they have no influence in local bodies. Formal education is not enough. Along with the three Rs. which have their real value, something on the lines of modern handicraft project should be introduced, but should be radically modified to meet the needs of the Kols. Tribal interests and skills should be worked into any curriculum set up. Such schemes should not be left in the hands of local bodies, who, far too often, have no genuine concern for the aboriginal, but should be the direct concern of the Provincial Government.

Much of the Indian Penal Code cannot be applied to primitive tribes. Where lawyers cannot be consulted the groups get along with a minimum of trouble to the authorities. The tribal life is regulated

1 Verrier Elwin, in "The Aboriginals" (Oxford Pamphlets on Indian Affairs No. 14) says "If you want to help the aboriginal, do not try to reform him : reform the lawyer, the doctor, the schoolmaster, the official, the merchant, with whom he has to deal. Until that is done it is far better to leave the aboriginals alone. p. 31.

i:Griffiths M-5 (ca. 1940) 1946 AW37 Kol AW37

Appendix III

NOTES ON POETRY IN CHAPTER XI

I. Songs of Nature.

1. A *dohárí* from Katni. The theme of love is also set forth. The crow is symbolical of an ordinary human being.

2. The chakahí-chakí (or Chakhí-chakvá) (*casarca rutila*) birds are a pair supposed to be under an eternal curse. During the day they may stay together and sport in the river, but when night comes they must be separated and stay apart from one another. A *dohárí* from Katni.

3. A *dádrí* from Imalhapur village.

4. A *dohárí* from Katni.

Bélá: a kind of jasmin. *Chameli*: a creeper of the jasmin type.
Sarangí: a one-stringed country violin.
Sitár: an instrument usually having seven strings.

5. A *birhá* or forest song. This is sung as one walks through the forest and no musical instrument is used to accompany it. The woman is anxious about her husband whom she calls her lord.

II. Life: its Joys and Sorrows.

1. This song is a *rdí* from Sihora.

2. The 'green month' is *Sáwan*, which corresponds to the last half of July and the first half of August. The rains by this time have set in well and the heat-scorched landscape has been transformed. It is of the *dádrí* type of song and comes from Barela.

3. A *dádrí* from Katni.

4. A wedding *dohárí* from the village of Salavara. This song and others like it are used to tease the bridegroom. Here the girl is said to protest the choice of a mate for her.

5. A *dádrí* from Katni.

6. Called '*bárhmási*.' 'A twelve-month song.' Sung by women who have to stay at home while their husbands go afar for work. This song is from Katni and comes from a woman. There are only ten of the Hindi months named here; Sáwan and Pús are omitted by the singer, probably by error. The Hindi months are as follows—

Ásárh	..	June-July.
Sáwan	..	July-August (omitted in the poem).
Bhádon	..	August-September.
Kunwár	..	September-October.
Kátika	..	October-November.
Aghana	..	November-December.
Pús	..	December-January (omitted above).
Mágha	..	January-February.

[The native texts of songs and poetry will be found on pp. 221-249.—Analyst]

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Phâgun	..	February-March.
Chaita	..	March-April.
Baishâkha	..	April-May.
Jeth	..	May-June.

III. LOVE AND INTRIGUE.

1. A *dâdrâ* from Katni. The *lotâ* is a brass vessel used for carrying liquids. A cord is frequently tied about its neck and it is lowered into a well in order to bring up water. See note on 6, 7 below.

2. A *kâfilî* from Imalhapur. This is a teasing song and in this case the *kaflî* is addressed to a young maid of beauty. The *pânwâlîâ* prepares and sells the *pân*, a mixture of betel nut, lime and tobacco wrapped in Piper leaves (*Piper betel*).

3. A *dâdrâ* from Katni.

4. A *dâdrâ* sung at the wedding season: from Jubbulpore. The suspicious husband is assured that his wife's smiles and blushes are innocent, and are directed to no other man. The first line should be repeated four times.

5. A *dâdâr* from Katni. The *dhimar* is a member of the fisherman caste, but is used in another sense.

6, 7. These are both *dâdrâs* from Katni. The symbolism of these two songs is perhaps obvious. Sexual matters are referred to by the men as entering a house, as a lotus on a pond or in terms of getting water from the well.

8. A *rîî* from Katni.

9. A *biyâ*, or wedding song; sung at the time of the circumambulation of the sacred post. From Salavara. The terms of relationship are noted in the text of the translation. The intrigue is rather complicated and it is evident that the mother-in-law, who ought to be on her guard, is a simpleton and does not realize what is going on. The symbolism is apparent.

IV. SONGS OF SOCIAL EVENTS.

1. This song is called *chhaukar* as it is sung on the sixth night after the birth of a child. The woman complains that the in-laws care nothing for her birth-pangs. Given by women near Katni.

2. A *badhwâ*, a song sung by women when a male child is born. The song is kept up for long periods and is repeated again and again. It is essentially a song of congratulation. Ayodhya was the place of Ram's birth. This song given by women near Katni.

3. Another *chhaukar* or sixth-night song from Katni. A Kajali forest (dense—black as *kajal*) is one inhabited by elephants. The swing has a sexual symbolism.

4. A *dâdrâ* from Imalhapur. The *Pûrabiyâs* are dwellers in the eastern parts. There is a Purbiya subdivision of Chamars. (Briggs, *op. cit.* page 24). The *Baghels* are men of Baghelkhand.

5. A *rîî* from Katni.

6. A marriage *dâdrâ* from Barela and sung as a teasing song. *Marwâ* or *marhwâ*: the wedding booth.

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Khambā: the sacred post.
Kalas: The water pot.
Chauka: The small raised platform under the booth.
Haldī: Turmeric (*Circuma longa*).

7. This is a wedding song from Barela. The headings indicate the time the song is sung.

8. The important guests are teased by being told that they are being fed with food fit only for animals.

9. Another song with a sting. Sung in connection with the arrival of the bridegroom's party. From Salavara.

10, 11. From Barela.

12. A marriage *dādrā* from Barela. The whole is a coarse series of jesting absurdities: the unmarried woman can hardly have a daughter-in-law, and yet the latter is pregnant. It is, however, her sister who is fed the food given to women in confinement, and a woman who is a mere spectator to all this suddenly gives birth to the child which a barren woman takes and suckles. [522]

13. A wedding *dādrā* from Katni. The *kadam* tree is the *Nauclea orientalis*. In wedding imagery the bridegroom is frequently likened to a parrot. [302]

14. A *rāī* from Katni. The spot of vermillion denotes a living husband. 554

15. A wedding song from Barela in which the bride is teased and warned to be careful. A lakh is 100,000. [80]

16. From Barela. The *bardī* is being teased. Kajli forest is a forest frequented by elephants. A *gutkā* is a magic ball prepared by devotees which, when eaten, is supposed to make one invisible. Here it makes others disappear [789]

V. Songs of Religion.

1. *Dādrās* from the vicinity of Katni. These are examples of numerous songs of this nature which were collected and translated but are not reproduced here. It is likely that most of the songs centering about Rām and his experiences in search of Sītā are borrowed as in their actual worship Rām is seldom taken into account by Kols. Dasarath was the father of Rām. 539 577 869 [777]

3. From Sihora: a *rāī*.

4. A *dohārī* from Imalhapur. The *ghumachī* is said to be a fruit of reddish colour with black spots upon it. It is probably the *ghunghachī* (*Abrus Precatorius*.) For *chakhī-chakvā* birds see notes on 1: 2. [37]

5. This has references to the Rāmāyaṇa story. A *dohārī* from Imalhapur.

6. A song for the *phāg* season, composed in Garha. *Phāg* and *holī* refer to the same season. A *bunda* is a dot or decoration on the forehead to enhance a woman's beauty. Kashi is the holy city of Benares. 539 [302]

7. A *bhajan* called *sumaran*—'song of remembrance'. Hinglās: or Kailās, the holy mount of Siva in the Himalayas. Maihar: a town and state about 100 miles north of Jubbulpore. It is the seat of the main temple dedicated to Shārdā *devī*. [778]

8. A *bhagat* from Jubbulpore. *Lagan*: the wedding horoscope. *Bardī*: the party which comes to the girl's house bringing the groom with [585]

Ham.